

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PORT L 00258 181615Z
ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00 EB-08 AID-05 IO-13
SIL-01 LAB-04 COME-00 /098 W
-----181723Z 112241 /40

R 180812Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6542
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE
AMEMBASSY VICTORIA
CINCUSNAVEUR
COMIDEASTFOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT LOUIS 0258

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PINT MP
SUBJECT: MAURITIUS WEEKLY REVIEW - MARCH 18

REF: PORT LOUIS 235

SUMMARY: PORT LOUIS 0257 PROVIDES A SUMMARY OF THIS CABLE.
END SUMMARY.

1. ON NOMINATION DAY, MARCH 16, A TOTAL OF 268 CANDIDATES REGISTERED TO CONTEST THE 126 COUNCIL SEATS IN THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS TO BE HELD APRIL 24. (THREE WITHDREW THE NEXT DAY.) AS EXPECTED, IT WILL BE A CONTEST BETWEEN THE MAURITIAN MILITANT MOVEMENT (MMM) ON THE ONE HAND, AND A COALITION OF THE LABOR PARTY, THE MAURITIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PMSD) AND THE MUSLIM COMMITTEE OF ACTION (CAM) ON THE OTHER. THE COALITION HAS DIVIDED UP THE 19 WARDS IN THE FIVE MUNICIPALITIES SO THAT ONLY ONE OF THE THREE PARTNERS IS CONTESTING THE MMM IN EACH
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PORT L 00258 181615Z

WARD. THE PMSD IS CAMPAIGNING IN 11 WARDS, THE LABOR PARTY IN 7 AND THE CAM IN ONE. ALTOGETHER THE MMM PRESENTED 126 CANDIDATES, THE PMSD 66, LABOR 52 AND THE CAM FIVE. THERE ARE ONLY 16 INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES.

2. THE LABOR PARTY IS RUNNING ENTIRELY NEW AND UNTESTED CANDIDATES, WHILE THE MMM IS RELYING ON MANY OF THE LEADING

LIGHTS OF THE PARTY INCLUDING PAUL BERENGER, SHEILA BAPPOO, JEAN CLAUDE DE L'ESTRAC, KADER BHAYAT, MRS. CZIFFRA AND SYDNEY SELVON PLUS A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF OTHER ASSEMBLY MEMBERS. PMSD LEADER GAETAN DUVAL IS RUNNING IN CUREPIPE AND TWO OF THE PARTY'S EIGHT ASSEMBLY MEMBERS ARE ALSO CANDIDATES. THESE ELECTIONS WILL PROVIDE A TRUE TEST OF STRENGTH FOR BOTH THE MMM AND THE GOVERNING COALITION, AS THEY MEET HEAD-TO-HEAD IN THE URBAN AREAS WITHOUT LABOR AND THE PMSD DIVIDING THE ANTI-MMM VOTE AS THEY DID IN THE DECEMBER ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS. THE MMM SHOULD DO WELL IN PORT LOUIS, BUT LABOR AND THE PMSD ARE TOGETHER LIKELY TO CARRY THE OTHER FOUR TOWNS, AS THEY LARGELY DID IN DECEMBER.

3. AFTER A LOT OF SPECULATION AS TO WHETHER GAETAN DUVAL WOULD CONTINUE AS LEADER OF THE PMSD, A PARTY MEETING ON 14 MARCH GAVE THE EXPECTED VERDICT: DUVAL WILL STAY. THERE WAS SOME CONSIDERATION GIVEN TO MAKING ELIEZER FRANCOIS, THE MINISTER OF HOUSING, THE PARTY LEADER, SINCE DUVAL LOST HIS SEAT IN THE ASSEMBLY, BUT IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THERE IS NO REPLACEMENT FOR DUVAL, AT LEAST NOT YET.

4. THE FIRST OF FOUR BALLOT RECOUNTS FOR CHALLENGED SEATS IN THE DECEMBER ELECTIONS WAS DECIDED IN FAVOR OF THE ELECTED MMM ASSEMBLY MEMBER, MRS. VIDULA NABABSINGH, WHOSE ELECTION HAD BEEN CONTESTED BY LINDSAY CARVER OF THE PMSD. A RECOUNT GAVE HER A SLIGHTLY LARGER MARGIN OF VICTORY THAN DECLARED IN DECEMBER.

5. IN A LONG INTERVIEW WITH L'EXPRESS, AGRICULTURE MINISTER
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PORT L 00258 181615Z

BOOLELL, WHO IS CONSIDERED THE "STRONG MAN" OF THE GOVERNMENT, DISCUSSED THE SITUATION OF THE LABOR PARTY CANDIDLY. HE ADMITTED THAT LABOR HAD DEPENDED TOO MUCH ON HINDU VOTES AND HAD NEGLECTED TO APPEAL TO THE OTHER, MINORITY COMMUNITIES. SOME INCUMBENTS HAD NEGLECTED THEIR DISTRICTS, AND THE OPPOSITION HAD SOWN DIVISION AMONG COMMUNITIES, PARTICULARLY IN DRAWING THE MUSLIMS AWAY FROM THE LABOR PARTY. A LEFTWARD MOVEMENT BY LABOR IS NECESSARY, HE SAID, BECAUSE THE PEOPLE WANT CHANGE. HE INSISTED THAT THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT WILL LAST FOR FIVE YEARS SO PEOPLE SHOULD STOP EXPECTING NEW ELECTIONS SOON.

6. IN AN INTERVIEW WITH A REUNION PAPER, MMM LEADER BERENGER PREDICTED THERE WILL BE GENERAL ELECTIONS IN JULY, BECAUSE THE FINANCE MINISTER WILL NOT BE ABLE TO PRESENT A BUDGET IN JUNE THAT WILL PAY FOR ALL THE LABOR PARTY'S PROMISES. HE PREDICTED DEFEAT FOR LABOR AND THE PMSD WHETHER THEY RUN IN COALITION OR NOT. HE SAID THERE EXIST TWO RIGHTIST GROUPS IN MAURITIUS, THE STUPID RIGHT AND THE INTELLIGENT RIGHT, THE LATTER BEING REALISTIC IN KNOWING THAT THE MMM WILL ASSUME POWER WITHIN

SIX MONTHS. ASKED ABOUT A POSSIBLE COALITION OF HIS PARTY WITH LABOR, HE SAID THAT'S UP TO RAMGOOLAM. BERENGER SAID THE MMM DOES NOT PLAN TO INSTALL A SYSTEM RESEMBLING THOSE OF EASTERN EUROPE, THOUGH HIS PARTY HAS CONTACT WITH THE COMMUNIST COUNTRIES, BUT RATHER SOMETHING RESEMBLING WHAT THE NON-COMMUNIST FRENCH LEFT FAVORS -- SOCIALISM AND "AUTOGESTION." HE SAID BREAKING RELATIONS WITH SOUTH AFRICA IS NOT POSSIBLE, BUT AT LEAST MAURITIUS SHOULDN'T HAVE GOOD RELATIONS WITH THAT COUNTRY AND SHOULDN'T ALLOW ITSELF TO BECOME DEPENDENT ON SOUTH AFRICA.

7. THE NEXT DAY LE MILITANT QUOTED BERENGER AS SAYING THE REUNION PAPER, WHICH IS RIGHTIST, HAD PUT WORDS IN HIS MOUTH, ESPECIALLY ON SOUTH AFRICA AND THE MAURITIAN RIGHT, AND HE DENIED MAKING THE STATEMENT ABOUT A COALITION WITH LABOR.

8. AT THE NEW ASSEMBLY'S SECOND SESSION MARCH 15 THERE WAS A REPETITION OF THE EXCHANGES AT THE MARCH 1 SESSION. SPEAKING CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 PORT L 00258 181615Z

ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT, NEW LABOR DEPUTY PEEROO DEFENDED THE GOVERNMENT AGAINST OPPOSITION CHARGES, BUT THEN PROCEEDED TO CRITICIZE ITS HANDLING OF THE PROBLEMS OF PRICES AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT. MMM LEADER BERENGER SPOKE FOR 70 MINUTES, GIVING A CRITIQUE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC POLICIES. IN SUMMARY HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAS NO POLICY, IS NOT GOVERNING THE COUNTRY, WILL NOT BE ABLE TO FINANCE ALL THE SCHEMES IT HAS PROMISED, HAS NOT ESTABLISHED ITS PRIORITIES, IS NOT DEALING WITH THE CRISES IN VARIOUS SECTORS SUCH AS TRANSPORT, HOUSING, PRICES, THE PORT, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SECURITY, AND HAS NOT FACED THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE END OF THE BOOM IN SUGAR PRICES. BERENGER PREDICTED THAT THE ECONOMIC CRISIS WILL DEEPEN AND WILL LEAD TO DEVALUATION OF THE RUPEE. THE MMM LEADER PROMISED THAT HIS PARTY WOULD PROVIDE A "CONSTRUCTIVE" OPPOSITION. IN ANOTHER BREAK WITH TRADITION, THE LEADER OF THE MMM OPPOSITION FAILED TO JOIN IN THE USUAL STATEMENTS OF HOMAGE TO DR MAURICE CURE, A FOUNDER OF THE LABOR PARTY WHO RECENTLY DIED. SOME PAPERS LABELLED THIS A MMM "FAUX PAS."

9. SUPPORTERS OF THE MMM DISPLAYED A PRO-MMM BANNER AT THE MOMENT THE MAURITIAN FLAG WAS BEING RAISED AT THE MARCH 12 INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY CEREMONIES, CAUSING MUCH ADVERSE COMMENT. L'EXPRESS LABELLED IT A "FAUX PAS". BERENGER SAID IT WAS NOT PLANNED BUT WAS A SPONTANEOUS ACT, THUS TRYING TO LIGHTEN THE ADVERSE IMPACT. THE PRO-GOVERNMENT PRESS DENOUNCED THIS ACT OF "TREASON" AND EVEN THE PRO-MMM MAURICIEN CALLED IT IN "BAD TASTE" AND CONDEMNED IT SEVERELY AS CONTRARY TO NATIONAL UNITY. LE MILITANT DISASSOCIATED THE MMM FROM THIS ACT, WHICH IT ATTRIBUTED TO THE "YOUTH AND ENTHUSIASM" OF SOME OF ITS SUPPORTERS.

10. MMM PRESIDENT JUGNAUTH LATER SENT A LETTER TO THE GOVERNOR GENERAL CONDEMNING THIS ACT BY MMM PARTISANS, SAYING THEY HAD BEEN "SEVERELY REPRIMANDED." HE ASSURED THE GOVERNOR GENERAL THAT THE MMM FULLY RESPECTS HIM, THE COUNTRY, ITS INDEPENDENCE AND ITS FLAG.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 05 PORT L 00258 181615Z

KEELEY

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS, ELECTION CANDIDATES, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 18-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977PORTL00258
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770093-0743
Format: TEL
From: PORT LOUIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770345/aaaabnad.tel
Line Count: 182
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: d900eeb5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 PORT LOUIS 235
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3066006
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MAURITIUS WEEKLY REVIEW - MARCH 18
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, MP
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d900eeb5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009